



Dos Rios Elementary teacher Roxie Butkus earns National Board Certified Teacher status

December 9, 2009 – Roxie Butkus, a third-grade teacher at Dos Rios Elementary meets the highest standards for teachers.

She is one of 82,000 teachers nationwide since 1987 to complete the intense certification process from the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards. She is the third employee in District 6 to achieve National Board Certified Teacher status. Molly Darnell, an administrator at Cameron Elementary School, and Darrelanne Sundeen, an Exceptional Student Services coordinator, each have attained NBCT status as well.



National Board Certification is a voluntary assessment program designed to develop, recognize and retain accomplished teachers. The status is achieved through a performance-based assessment which usually takes one to three years to complete. While state licensing systems set basic requirements to teach in each state, NBCTs have successfully demonstrated advanced teaching knowledge, skills and practices. According to its website, the NBPTS bases its certification on its Five Core Propositions: Teachers are committed to students and their learning; teachers know the subjects they teach and how to teach those subjects to students; teachers are responsible for managing and monitoring student learning; teachers think systematically about their practice and learn from experience; and teachers are members of learning communities.

Teachers in Colorado who earn national certification are awarded a \$1,600 annual stipend from the state, and an additional \$3,200 per year for teaching in a school that received a low or unsatisfactory rating on the previous year's school accountability report. The stipend amount is determined annually according to the state's budget.

Butkus said it took her about two years to complete the certification process. She recently answered a few questions about the process:

Q: What made you want to become certified?

A: I began this process two years ago while teaching in Washington state. It was fairly common there for teachers to undergo the National Boards experience, and several of my colleagues had certified (it was quite a shock coming to Colorado, where people say "what's that?"). After teaching for 11 years, I knew I was an effective teacher, but I was willing to learn how to be a better one. I had heard that this was "the best professional development" one could receive and that it would help you meet the needs of your students ... the ones you have right now.



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Q: How difficult was it?

A: It was the most difficult educational experience I have gone through so far. As with any great learning experience in life, it was challenging, daunting, frustrating, time consuming, and yet the most rewarding and beneficial thing I could ever do as a teacher. It took me about 600 hours to complete the process ... but it was constantly on my mind. I did the bulk of the work (the first year) in Washington state and then finished last year while a “new teacher” in District 6.

You are required to submit four portfolio entries. Three are classroom based, where video recordings and examples of student work serve as documentation. A fourth entry documents accomplishments that focus on your work within the teaching profession and your outreach to families and the community. There is also an assessment component where you are expected to demonstrate your knowledge of content across the range of the certificate you have chosen.



Q: What was it like to try to fit everything into your already-busy schedule as a teacher?

A: I really have to thank God for the people and resources he put in place to make this possible for me. Teaching is a demanding, all consuming profession and it is so difficult to fit anything “extra” into an already crazy schedule! I was extremely blessed with a wonderful support system, but without an understanding husband, it would have been impossible! I neglected plenty of laundry and housework when I was writing and studying! :)

Q: What kinds of differences have you seen in your own teaching as a result of this?

A: I am much more intentional in my teaching/learning to meet the needs of my students and to teach towards meeting the National Standards in education. The constant, continual cycle of Plan, Teach, Analyze student work and Reflect is ingrained in my daily routine. I regularly ask myself, “How do I know that my students are learning? Can I prove it? If my teaching is not effective, what can I do differently next time?”

Q: Was there a specific focus of your work (i.e., elementary education, special education, English-as-a-Second-Language, etc.), or does that even apply)?

A: There are 25 certificate areas that cover many subject and age categories. Mine was called “Early Childhood Generalist.”

Q: How does this compare to getting an advanced degree with a certain focus?



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A: It is cheaper. The cost is just over \$3,000, but many states (including Colorado) or districts offer partial scholarships. It was also more focused and relevant to me ... it was specifically focused on making MY teaching and MY students' learning experiences more effective and successful.

Q: What were some of the highlights of this process for you?

A: The highlight for me was the dialogue that took place between me and my colleagues. It was wonderful to give and receive genuine feedback and to share ideas and “stories” together.

Q: How will this help you in the future?

A: It has made me more confident in my teaching and in sharing what I know and have learned. I now “own” what I do well and know what areas I need to grow in. It is important to know that you don't have to be a “Super Teacher” to certify ... just a willingness to learn and improve your teaching practices.

To learn more about National Board Certification, visit nbpts.org, which has searchable information about each state.